

Mass Accommodation In Opole Ghetto



This is a picture of one of the mass accommodations in Opole ghetto, Poland, which my father had taken by a local Jewish photographer in June 1941.

My parents, Wilhem and Johanna Schischa [nee Friedmann], were deported to Opole ghetto in Poland from Vienna on 26th February 1941. They were murdered a year later in either Belzec or Sobibor concentration camp.

I own a large number of letters, which my parents wrote to Aunt Fany, Aunt Berta and my grandmother from the ghetto before they were murdered. Aunt Berta gave me a little leather suitcase after the war which included all documents and letters she had collected before Aunt Fany and my grandmother were deported. That way all these valuable documents were preserved.

Apart from these letters, my father also sent photos from Opole ghetto. Opole was a village that had been sealed off. Jews who lived there weren't allowed to leave, and more and more Jews arrived. There were a bakery, a butcher's shop, a barber's shop, restaurants and a photo shop, just like in any normal village. However, nothing could be brought into the ghetto, so food soon became extremely expensive, and my parents' depended on help from their relatives in Vienna. It must have been very important to my father, to have life in the ghetto captured on film. The Jewish photographer took pictures of everything my father told him to capture on film. My father inscribed things on some of the pictures and sent them to Vienna.

In his letters to his relatives my father expressed both his thanks for all the parcels they sent to him and my mother, and his fear of an uncertain future. My father wrote about the mass accommodation in the ghetto:

?If you could only see our one-storied ?chicken-coop? ... 8 people sleep on the first floor, so to speak, and 7 on the second. And believe it or not, but we are comfortable enough and have enough space. 2,700 people, who still have to sleep on the floor or on a wooden board, or, in the best case

scenario on a deck-chair, envy us. It has been pouring with rain since yesterday and we are happy to have good boots. Many people with shoes get stuck in the mud ...?